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The Democratization Process in Niger: A Study on the Failure of the 3rd Republic Regime

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Abstract

This article focuses on the first democratic regime in Niger after the advent of multiparty system in 1990. The study will concern the direct and indirect causes that led to the failure of the democratization process. Niger experienced in 1991 a National Sovereign Conference which ended the one-party system by establishing a multi-party democratic system under a semi-presidential regime. In 1993, the CDS Rahama party with the support of the AFC won the first presidential and legislative elections marking the beginning of the 3rd Republic. Unfortunately, in 1994, an unexpected turning marked the beginning of an intricate regime. The AFC will lose his major ally and the parliamentary majority at the same time. This event led to a political cohabitation in Niger. Thus, clashes between the presidential clan and the opposition, took more and more magnitude until the normal functioning of government was almost impossible. The regime of the 3rd Republic will be interrupted in 1996 by a military coup. The problematic of this article will focus on three aspects, namely, the conditions under which the AFC coalition was born, how did the regime of the 3rd Republic end up in a political cohabitation? And the democratic challenges that followed. These three aspects will allow us to understand how democracy, which foresaw situations like what happened in Niger in 1995 and whose institutions were supposed to facilitate the settlement of this type of crisis, failed.

Keywords: cohabitation, democracy, elections, military coup, multiparty, political opposition.

1. Introduction

In 1960 with independences, the Republic of Niger and many other African states opted for one-party system to ensure social cohesion by gathering people under the same ideology. Fourteen years later, a military coup put an end to the single party by establishing a military regime. In 1987, after the death of President Kountché, his chief of staff Ali Saïbou took the power. He will then create the National Movement for the Society of Development (MNSD) party and will become the President of the 2nd Republic during a non-competitive election in 1989 under a new constitution. However, “in 1990, the president allowed political pluralism and announced the holding a National Consultative Conference on possible constitutional reforms” (*Perspective Monde*). This achievement was possible in 1991 thanks to the participation of important personalities and representatives of the people in a framework of national discussion with the aim to reorganize the basic pillars of the state. At the end, a transitional government was put together to compile and

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study the results of the conference in order to draft a new constitution that would define the new institutions and the relationship between the ruled and the rulers. “The advent of democracy in Niger took place in a few years, the country moving from a one-party regime to a democratic political system which allowed nigeriens to freely elect their President of the Republic and their representatives to the National Assembly” (Boko, 2018). In 1992, the new constitution was adopted by referendum and elections took place between February and March 1993. It was the first competitive elections in Niger since independence. The new political parties born with the advent of multiparty politics in 1990 alongside the MNSD old single party began to organize themselves for the conquest of power. The various parties that have participated in the election were the CDS, MNSD, PND, UPDP, PPN-RDA, PSDN, and UDFP.

2. The Setting up of the AFC Coalition

“In the early 1990s, many African countries also experienced the emergence of a popular claim for more democracy. And these movements were accompanied by a striking renewal of political discourse, mainly in through the appearance of a free, critical and virulent press” (Frère Marie-Soleil, 1999). In Niger with the advent of democracy, a new electoral code was established and the constituencies were prepared for the first democratic election. Niger's electoral system was designed through the study of popular participation and partisan diversity. In its context of multipolarity where no political party can hold a substantial majority individually, Niger adopted a two round electoral system, which requires the political parties to form alliances in order to win the election. Thereby, on February 14, 1993, Nigeriens voted during the legislative elections.

It is through the results of these elections that the first political coalition took shape. In fact, the MNSD, majoritarian, won 29 seats out of 83 distributed among 8 participating parties. Thus, having noted “the electoral breakthrough of the MNSD-Nassara from the old party-state. It is to ‘block the way’ at the MNSD that certain leaders of political parties signed an agreement, the Alliance Forces for Change (AFC) which is a common front of struggle on the basis of a common platform. The primary objective is to constitute a majority parliamentary group. Indeed, the addition of the seats obtained by the parties composing the alliance gave the AFC the majority in the National Assembly. The AFC made the word ‘change’ his workhorse but the contours of it are not clear” (Dodo, 1995). It is clear that a break with the old system and the people who participated in it, strongly motivated the establishment of this alliance. The MNSD against who it was necessary to oppose, represented a generation whose ideologies were considered as those of a bygone era. The AFC was a way for political leaders to ensure not only an overwhelming victory but also to express their will and commitment for a change that will promote a better democracy. The AFC is a pre-electoral coalition which was formed following the legislative elections. The electoral system of Niger being majoritarian in two rounds, the political parties decide to ally with each other generally after having knowledge the number of seats obtained individually during the elections of the members of parliament. Generally, “a pre-electoral coalition exists when multiple parties choose to co-ordinate their electoral strategies rather than run for office alone. This co-ordination can take many forms. For example, party leaders may announce to the electorate that they plan to form a government together if successful at the polls or they may simply agree to run under a single name with joint lists or nomination agreements” (Golder, 2006).

During the transitional period followed by the elections, the political discourse underwent a considerable evolution marked by a dynamic of denunciation and positioning. The new leaders of the political parties, aware of the challenges and the new popular preferences, engaged themselves in strategic propaganda and manly campaigns called for change. A political change certainly, but also a change of mentality, because it was now necessary to hold a discourse promoting popular rallying in order to benefit of people’s sympathy by trying to show how important the matter of general political preferences are. The promotion of a new ideologies that believe in the establishment of a legitimate government for a society where freedom will be guaranteed on the basis of the rule of law, should influence the questioning of misinformation and the authoritarian form of the old system which must be fought at all cost. In this dynamic, “everyone wants to keep their new discourse which would distance them from a troubled past or justify their failures. Everyone wants to take the people as witness on his mutations and his new tinsel” (Frère Marie-Soleil, 1999).

The AFC was a form of shield against a certain return to the old regime. It was “organized around the notion of change [...] this idea is concentrated in the word tchendji, which means

‘change’ in Hausa, the main vernacular, and will become the watchword of the party of the future president Mahamane Ousmane” (Frère Marie-Soleil, 1999). During the parliamentary election, CDS won 22 seats behind MNSD, making its candidate the main opponent and a potential leader for a front against the former single party. Thus, the various other political parties decided to join forces around Mahamane Ousmane, candidate of CDS-Rahama in order to win the Presidential election. The main members of the Alliance Forces for Change are the Niger Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS-Tarayya) led by intellectuals (academics, senior officials) and trade unionists, from the Niger Alliance for Democracy and progress (ANDP-Zaman Lahiya) and some small formations with regionalist coloring (Grégoire, 1995). The eight parties that composed the coalition accounted 54 seats out of 83 in the National Assembly. This overwhelming majority was the first step towards political renewal. The second stage consisted of running individually in the first round of the presidential election, then joining the candidate who will obtain more votes for the second round. Thus, “On the 27th the first round of the presidential election took place, the last stage in the democratic process set up by the National Conference which met from August to November 1991. Mamadou Tandja, representative of the former regime, the MNSD president leads with 34.22 % of the vote, and Mahamane Ousmane, representative of the reformist left, head of the Democratic and Social Convention, who is a member of the AFC, in second place with 26.59 %. The second round, which is to designate the successor to Ali Saïbou, interim president appointed by the National Conference, must take place on March 20” (Niger. Victoire de l’opposition...).

The first round of the presidential elections, despite popular satisfaction, was not without contestation. The Supreme Court had been seized twice to settle disputes between the MNSD and the AFC coalition. In fact, after the first round of presidential election, the AFC members had decided to campaign together for the CDS candidate. MNSD was opposed to that decision, citing its irregularity regarding to what the electoral code says. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the MNSD, but that did not prevent AFC members from campaigning under the colors of the CDS. The Supreme Court will be seized a second time concerning the distribution of the posts of Prime Minister and President of the National Assembly in the case the AFC wins the election. The court was seized for violation of article 138 of the electoral code which indicates that “anyone who, by donations or gifts in money or in kind, by promises of employment from the State, its branches or public enterprises, made in order to influence the vote of one or more voters, will have obtained or attempted to obtain their suffrage either directly or through a third party, whoever, by the same means has determined or attempted to determine one or more of them to abstain, will be punished by one to five years imprisonment and a fine of fifty thousand to five hundred thousand francs”. However, the court ruled after the second round of the presidential election by rejecting the MNSD's request (Dodo, 1995).

Despite the tension between the political parties, the second round of the presidential elections took place on March 20, 1993 between the CDS and the MNSD. Indeed, it wasn't a surprise that “Mahamane Ousmane, candidate of the Democratic and Social Convention supported by the AFC, received 54.4 % of the vote” (Perspective Mond). Thus, he became the First President of Niger, elected in a multi-party election. The first political coalition in Niger, AFC was a strategic alliance of antagonists with a common adversary. It was undoubtedly decisive in the victory of CDS.

3. The End of the AFC Coalition and the First Political Cohabitation

After the overwhelming victory of the CDS supported by the AFC, the government of the 3rd Republic was formed. Constitutionally, Niger adopted a semi-presidential regime, which means that the executive branch is bicephalous. The separation of powers being rigid, a parliamentarian is elected President of the National Assembly by proposal of the majority. Thus, Mahamadou Issoufou leader of the PNDS will be appointed as Prime Minister and Moumouni Adamou Djermakoye leader of the ANDP will be elected President of the National Assembly.

Very quickly, the government of the 3rd republic started to face intense internal crises. Those crises unfortunately led to the rupture of the relation between the CDS and the PNDS. The breakdown in relations within the government coalition can be explained by certain elements. Indeed, the first point is that the regime of the 3rd republic rested on a coalition between several parties. This coalition was necessary because no party was able to secure a substantial majority individually and the electoral system of Niger being designed with regard to this aspect, the co-management of power was necessary. Also, the coalition was based on the distribution of political positions between members which was obviously not going to be without consequence (Gazibo,

2005). The analysis of these elements reveals weak bases not really capable to hold up after crises. Indeed, “the parties of the coalition, Alliance Forces for Change (AFC) which won the 1993 presidential and legislative elections, was shattered at the beginning of October 1994, with the resignation of Prime Minister Mahamadou Issoufou. This decision came after the promulgation of a presidential decree which removed most of its constitutional prerogatives by attaching in particular to the Presidency the Central Commission for Markets responsible for awarding state contracts. It also had deeper causes which, on the one hand, related to the economic management of the country and the measures to be taken to ensure its recovery and on the other hand, the concerns of supporters of the Prime Minister who denounced the stranglehold of the CDS-Rahama, party of President Mahamane Ousmane, on the state apparatus and the ‘business’ of some of its leaders” (Grégoire, 1995).

For Gazibo (Gazibo, 2005) “the fracture became inevitable when President Ousmane opened a head-on war with his Prime Minister Issoufou by first presenting him through his political friends as the person responsible for the errors of the alliance. He hoped to weaken it and then get rid of it, despite their pre-election agreement. In a second step, he decided to limit his powers by attaching to his cabinet important state services which until then depended on the Prime Minister, such as the State Inspectorate, the judicial police in economic and customs matters and tax or the Central Markets Commission. The connection between these services, the business community and the tremendous source of ‘clientelist’ rebate and redistribution that they represented is thus evident. Indeed, their control meant that of the award of contracts, the exercise of sanctions or the stifling of business. This provocation with obvious patrimonial underpinnings was one too many: on September 24, 1994, the crisis resulted in the resignation of the Prime Minister, followed by those of the ministers from his party. This rupture of alliance followed by a political re-composition opened a period of turbulent relations between the executive power and the legislative power...”

The President, in an attempt to redress the situation, proposed to the MNSD the formation of a government of national unity, “apparently, the President thought that by divorcing Issoufou, he could reconstitute a new majority with the MNSD or a faction of the MNSD. In a sense, the MNSD deceived the President because he had always said that he could not collaborate with the latter on the pretext that he had not broken with the PNDS. When the PNDS left him, he contacted the MNSD to form a new alliance, the latter refused to ally himself with his enemy yesterday, the PNDS. It was a surprising alliance because the whole “progressive” history of the PNDS, from student radicalism to the creation of the party, was built on acerbic criticism and a struggle against the MNSD oligarchy. An alliance with this party was, so to speak, the last thing we could expect” (Ibrahim, 1999). Therefore, the President operated a government reshuffle to strengthen its relations with parties that have remained loyal to the coalition. The departure of the PNDS on the other hand was not without consequence for the coalition and the regime. It was a heavy blow because the AFC had just lost an imposing ally, but things became worrying when the PNDS joined the MNSD in the opposition carrying the seats that had conferred the parliamentary majority to the AFC. The President worried by the political cohabitation was not considering such situation. He then had no other choice but to dissolve the National Assembly on October 17, 1994 and call for new legislative elections. The aim was to reverse the situation by the popular vote to be held on December 31, 1994 (Grégoire, 1995). The dissolution of the National Assembly by the President will be subjected to numerous criticisms both in the country and abroad. It was clear that this decision was not going to improve the situation. The upcoming challenge was going to be significant, the opposition resolved to put an end to the power of the President designated as haemogenic, was ready to do everything to keep this new majority that is said to be ‘born against nature’. Meanwhile, the President, confident that returning to the polls is the best solution to regain the upper hand, embarked on this path with the support of what remained of the AFC.

The election was originally scheduled for December 31, 1994, between the two blocs; the AFC on the one hand regrouping the CDS-Rahama and the ANDP Zaman Lahiya to which were joined small parties in particular the UDPS-Amana the PSDN-Alheri and the PUND-Salama and the opposition composed of the MNSD and its new ally PNDS-Tarayya supported by UDFP-Sawaba, UPDP-Chamoua and PPN-RDA. “Despite all the ups and downs that punctuated the organization of these early legislative elections, they finally took place on January 12, 1995 in satisfactory conditions of regularity and under the watchful eye international and national observers and human rights associations such as the Niger Human Rights Association (ANDDH) and the

Democracy, Freedom, Development (DLD) association. The fraud recorded here and there does not call into question the verdict of the ballot boxes (Grégoire, 1995). Unfortunately, the “bet was lost since the legislative elections [...] saw the defeat of the parties of the presidential movement. The president, after many delaying tactics, was forced to appoint as Prime Minister Hama Amadou from MNSD and having the active support of the PNDS, Niger was forced to live for an experience, rare in Africa, of French coexistence (Grégoire, 1996).

After the defeat of the AFC, the CDS regime was then forced to share the power with the opposition. This is how Niger experienced an exceptional situation which is called political cohabitation. The political cohabitation is a configuration specific to the semi-presidential regime. We observe this situation when a President elected by universal suffrage fails to obtain a parliamentary majority, or in the case of Niger, lose the majority after early legislative elections. “The origin of the term “cohabitation” is from “cohabit” as a political term since the year 1986. It was used for the first time when Franswa Metearan was obliged to appoint Jack Sherack as a prime minister (1986–1988) in spite of both being from opposite parties, the first is socialist and the latter is rightist. Practically, “cohabitation” is represented in Metearan Cohabiting Ladward Baladour (1993–1995), and Sherack cohabiting with the socialist Lionel Jospin” (Al-Safaar, 2015). Niger has inherited the French political system after the decolonization, but did not have as much experience as France in democracy. The cohabitation of 1995 was a new event in the country and the whole sub-region. The institutional and political challenges that the government was going to face will be determinant for its survival. Since cohabitation is not inevitable, it is also foreseen in a democratic system with a semi-presidential regime. The President, forced to share power with a Prime Minister from the opposition, and deal with a President of the National Assembly hostile to him, the survival of the regime will then depend on the degree of collaboration and commitment between the two parties. It is in such a situation that one can discern the true intentions of politicians. The challenge will be important, of course, but when we analyze the status of members of the government, their commitment to the people must come before political quarrels. Thus, efforts should be made so that co-management is done in political stability, with the respect of the prerogatives recognized to each party, but above all in the unique interest of the Nigerien people and democracy cherished by each party.

4. Cohabitation Challenges and Failure of Democracy

The year 1995 began in an atmosphere of hostility within the government of the 3rd republic. Two years after the advent of the first democratic regime in Niger, a political cohabitation between the presidential mouvance and the opposition had complicated the task by imposing new challenges. Indeed, the first challenge was the sharing of power the executive apparatus between the President of the Republic Mamane Ousmane and the Prime Minister Hama Amadou. Secondly, the AFC, minoritarian in the National Assembly, will have to try somehow to pass laws despite the hostility between President Ousmane and the President of the Assembly Mahamadou Issoufou.

Hama Amadou, the new Prime Minister of the cohabitation, reaffirmed his attachment to the principles of pluralist democracy and democratic alternation by constituting a government made up of 16 members belonging to the opposition party. However, the absence of members from the presidential mouvance according to him was certainly not a form of ‘witch hunt’. This cohabitation is comparable to what France experienced in 1986 and 1993 that have not been without consequences. The day after the early elections the president created by presidential decree a post of General Secretary of the Council of Ministers and fixed the attributes of the holder of this post appointed by the President. The opposition was opposed this decree which the called to be a maneuver to dispossess the Prime Minister of his prerogatives. The Supreme Court seized for this purpose ruled in favor of the opposition. Refusing a ceremonial role, on April 6, President Ousmane refused to preside the Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister, denounced this refusal, which he qualified as an irresponsible act likely to make the functioning of the state institutions impossible. Things took a turn when the president wanted to impose on the Council of Ministers of April 20 a personal agenda. In the light of all these events, the AFC deputies decided to boycott the work of the National Assembly until the Prime Minister answered their concerns about his policies (Grégoire, 1995).

All eyes were then turned to the government of cohabitation. The behavior of the politicians was clearly not going to facilitate the functioning of the institutions of the State. Indeed, “we then remember the ‘strikes’ of the President of the Republic to preside over the councils of ministers,

thus demonstrating his refusal to endorse the decisions and points entirely transmitted by the Prime Minister's Office. This was the time when the Prime Minister Hama Amadou having administration and the public force dislodged manu militari the Directors General and other responsible of obedience from AFC. It was the time, when Hassoumi Massaoudou (still him) did not miss any occasion to charge the President... It was the time when the President of the National Assembly, Mahamadou Issoufou qualified and compared presidential activity to that of Sisyphus, this hero of Greek mythology who spent all his life doing useless work. This management of state affairs which the Nigeriens had described as tumultuous cohabitation” (Sanda, 2014).

The cohabitation allowed the MNSD fought during the 1993 elections to acquire decision-making power in the AFC regime. Therefore, it was not surprising to witness a confrontation between them. A form of revenge was at work when the wheel turned which led to the smothering of President Ousmane's regime. “Two factors have contributed to making cohabitation a fatal test for the Nigerien democratic process: extreme bipolarization, reinforced by the conditions of structuring of the two poles, as well as the logic of spoils against a background of interpretations divergent rules of the game” (Gazibo, 2005). The cohabitation was fatal to the regime of the 3rd Republic because of two aspects. The first take source at the time when the alliance against the MNSD was born, and the second following the appointment of the Prime Minister belonging to the opposition. “The extreme bipolarization of political life was the main factor in the breakdown of the Nigerien democratic process. It began to structure in 1993, when the Alliance Forces for Change (AFC) was formed to prevent the former single party from coming to power [...] with the departure of the Prime Minister and the constitution of a new majority by the PNDS and the MNSD, at the end of 1994, bipolarization became extreme. Two political poles of comparable weight had just been created. On the one hand, that structured around the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS) and the Nigerien Alliance for Democracy and Progress (ANDP) supporting the Head of State; on the other hand, the majority pole structured around the PNDS and the MNSD to which returned the right to appoint a prime minister [...] the common logic of the spoils, against a background of divergent interpretations of the rules of the game, is the second order of factors which made cohabitation a fatal test for the Nigerien democratic process in 1996. Indeed, if President Ousmane considered cohabitation as co-management, Prime Minister Hama Amadou considered it as an alternation [...] because of the semi-President regime of the regime, any conflict within the executive could not fail to spill over into parliament. When the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic were in conflict, it was also in the Assembly that accounts were settled, each group of deputies mobilizing to support its leader. Managing his relations with the Prime Minister therefore amounted, for the President of the Republic, to managing his relations with the parliamentary majority. This is why, in addition to the milestones which prepared the ground for a difficult cohabitation, the conflicts of attribution and the reciprocal maneuvers of ouster made it a fatal experience” (Gazibo, 2005).

Considering the arguments above, a division was created during the elections due the front which meant to block the MNSD. Unfortunately, the alliance was not strong enough to manage internal crises and to maintain itself. Politics obviously being a game of interest and ideological tendencies, the President's actions were undoubtedly the cause of PNDS's departure, but it's difficult to explain his alliance with the MNSD if not the desire of revenge. Back to the sender, the MNSD, in its seniority posture did not fail to take advantage of the situation to impose itself within a regime which was completely hostile to it, by making the PNDS an ally for a counterattack. The second aspect, which is the sharing of power, was not without consequences. In fact, while the President was trying to maintain his authority, the Prime Minister was making the cohabitation a decisive period for his party thus multiplying the confrontations and the disagreements.

Different elements contributed directly and indirectly to the interruption of the democratic process started with the advent of the multiparty system. The study of the survival of democracy is generally based on the socio-economic and politico-institutional analysis of a state. Indeed, the variables associated with the maintaining of a democratic regime are societal, institutional, media and external. Taking into account institutional variables, the semi-presidential regime is more likely to collapse due to crises within the different institutions, ie, conflicts within the executive or between the executive and the legislative branch. This variable has produced a plethora of research, particularly in the 1990s' (Diskin et al., 2005). Therefore, the democratic institutions, the behavior of political actors, the behavior of the population and finally the

interference of the army in politics are to be taking into account. First, the poor functioning of democratic institutions is one of the direct causes of the failure of democracy during the 3rd republic. Indeed, the maneuvers of the President in the aftermath of the election which consisted in reducing the powers of his ally namely Prime Minister and the mismanagement of the state's resources led the PNDS to leave the AFC which had a comfortable majority. Many of the President's actions were unconstitutional and quite possibly destabilizing for a new democracy. The rallying of the PNDS to the opposition which will be fatal to the CDS regime is no doubt due to the non-respect of the fundamental commitments of the coalition. The unconstitutional promises of this coalition and its actions during the second round of the elections had an impact on the democratic process. Regarding to that, "the lessons that can be learned after the first round of the elections is that the lack of state authority has enabled Nigerien democracy to start on false grounds made up of violations of the constitutional text and the electoral code and the silence of the authorities which had to intervene to recall the protagonists. Whatever the motivations of the authorities in question is, it is necessary in true democracy that the law be applied in all its rigor whenever it is violated" (Dodo, 1995). Laxity and lack of rigor during the 1993 elections contributed generously to the weakening of the basis on which democracy rests. The executive apparatus led by the President exceed its prerogatives defined by the constitution and that was possible because of the silence of the court during the election of 1993.

The democratic institutions failed especially during the political cohabitation. For Schumpeter, it is essential that democratic institutions can emerge from the internal crisis with the commitment to preserve democracy (Gazibo, 2005). The President and the Prime Minister were apparently not committed to make the cohabitation a success. The behaviors and the use of political power towards each other, made cohabitation a dark period in the political history of Niger. Without calling it a chance, we can argue that, Niger had experienced an exceptional situation which should have bring out the commitment to democracy and make it stronger. This game of who can do what within the executive will have repercussions on all the institutions of the state. The Ministers, of the opposition, loyal to their Prime Minister had no order to receive from the President of the Republic. The disorder will extend up to the National Assembly too. Indeed, the idea of popular representation was replaced by the desire for political retaliation materialized by the multiple boycott from both parties within the National Assembly. The institutions have unfortunately not been able to manage the crisis which threatened the survival of democracy as suggested by Schumpeter. At this point, one must consider the words of the members of the government of the 2nd republic who during the periods of demonstration for democracy replied by asserting that Niger was not ready for such a system. The failure of institutions and the behavior of political leaders proved this to be correct.

The anarchy which one observes within democratic institutions due to the cohabitation, is the result of the nonexistence of an ideology within political parties. Indeed, the alliance between the PND and the MNDS, qualified as an unnatural alliance, shows how much the ideological posture has been neglected by political parties. The pursuit of self-interest and the desire to gain some power has replaced the ideological belief, hence the advent of cohabitation. Thus, "The tension reached its climax at the end of January, as shown by the national radio transformed into a platform where incendiary statements succeeded one another. The President of the National Assembly did not hesitate, at the opening of the first session of parliament, on January 24, to openly accuse the presidential camp of ethnocentrism. At the same time, the majority accused the President of the Republic of violating article 46 of the Constitution by being elected president of his party. Rumors of the dissolution of the head of state's party were echoed by rumors of the president's dissolution of the National Assembly. It was in this context that on January 26, 1996, an additional step was taken. The President of the National Assembly has indeed asked the Supreme Court to declare President Ousmane's impediment." (Gazibo, 2005). The management of cohabitation, unknown in the political history of Niger, will be a complete failure. This is partly due to the fragility of the institutions but also to the behavior of political parties and politicians.

The second point concerns the behavior of political actors. Taking into account the mission which they are invested of, the political actors and members of the government must respect the ethic which is imposed on their character in co-management, without partisan diversity being destructive. Thus, the analysis of the behavior of all those who were directly or indirectly involved in governance during the 3rd republic reveals a lack of interest for institutions and democracy.

Some have gone so far as to envisage military intervention to put an end to the regime. “The semi-presidential regime did not succeed in resisting the shock, because «no doubt the actors of this ephemeral cohabitation lacked an ethics of behavior and the will to make concessions in order to maintain a consensus founder around the rules of the game». We could even evoke a possible complicity of certain actors, in particular the leaders of the majority, who would have incited the soldiers to take power. If this accusation was of course refuted by the actors questioned, the fact remains that their strategies undoubtedly worked against the system. This was what Sanoussi Jackou, CDS vice-president wanted to express, just after the putsch when he said that: «The soldiers did not take power by ambition, but because we couldn't get along. We sawed the branch we were sitting on»” (Gazibo, 2005).

Thirdly, one must also take into account the behavior of the population. Observing the chaotic situation, the population did not fail to express their dissatisfaction but also their dismay that the political issue had now replaced the interest of the population during political cohabitation. With the quarrels between the AFC and the opposition gaining momentum, the call for military intervention was seen by some as the last option. The total disinterestedness in the maintaining of an elected democratic regime, demonstrates the lack of political maturity of the population. A feeling of insecurity during the period of crisis will lead to neglect the advantage of democracy, to the point of wishing its end by arms if necessary. This behavior has contributed more or less to the weakening of democracy which needed popular support to survive. The army on the other side, undoubtedly took advantage of the generalized confusion and the despair of the people to put an end to the regime of the 3rd republic. This attribute of defender of democracy, was only an alibi for the army which took advantage of the first opportunity to regain a power which was forcibly wrested from them.

The rapid return of the army in the political scene was possible because “the emergence of the military in the political arena in Niger generally poses the problem of the place of the army in the political system. Undoubtedly, this lasting intrusion, from 1974 to 1991, contributed to the establishment and rooting of military regimes, with very little democratic content and favoring the installation at the top of the State of a military oligarchy little inclined to political openness [...] the prospect of a return of the civilians at the head of the state is dismissed sine die. This is without counting with the ‘east wind’ which shortens the second republic through the institutionalization of new rules of the political game by the Sovereign National Conference in July 1991. The army temporarily left power, but it returns to the scene twice in 1996 and 1999, making every time more precarious the new democratic institutions. Therefore, the question arises of the military professionalization. This is translated in the Nigerien context in very simple terms. How to keep the army out of the political arena in a country where it has accumulated considerable political capital through the lasting excretion of power? [...] considering these remarks, we understand that the Nigerien army, without any consideration for democracy, put an end to the process while maintaining that it is in the interest in safeguarding democracy. This coup put an end to the first democratic regime, undermining the hope of making Niger an example of democracy” (Alou, 2008). January 27, 1996, the regime of the 3rd republic after three difficult years, will be unfortunately interrupted by a military coup. The military junta will declare the dissolution of all the government, the suspension of the constitution and of all democratic institutions.

The last aspect of the failure of democracy was the post-coup events. Indeed, the coup of 1996 was acclaimed by those who (USTN, USN) fought with all their might for the democracy. The New Democracy had lost all meaning when structures like USN had shown no remorse that the Third Republic ended in that way. To this is added the words of those who contributed to the birth of cohabitation in the third republic, testimony of their lack of interest in democracy. Hama Amadou Prime Minister see the events as the result of “understandable motivation of military adding even that the coup creates the conditions for a new experience”; Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the National Assembly said that “for the moment the colonel Baré is keeping his promises. I stand by the fact”; For the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Bazoum “the coup was inevitable but did not settle anything [...] exasperated military as all citizens by political blockage found a way to end it does not seem until further notice hostile to democracy” (Gazibo, 2005).

5. Conclusion

The advent of democracy in Niger, which enabled the 1993 competitive elections, will remain a fundamental stage in the political evolution of Niger. Unfortunately, the inexperience or rather the verified lack of interest in doing what is necessary in the name of democracy, will lead the first democratic government to its loss. The analysis of this failure reveals from the creation of the AFC to the political cohabitation and finally the military coup of 1996 tense political situations and challenges that were higher than the commitments of the rulers. Political cohabitation, in other words, is one of the rare situations which shows to what extent democracy is a system which is not only complex, but above all resolved to allow everyone to participate in the management of the State. Thus, an opposition devoid of any decision-making power can acquire certain prerogatives allowing it to influence the regime of its adversary by integrating its government with the means of the ballot. Niger's new democracy, unable to maintain itself, reached its limit. The democratic process was stopped by forces acting out of their framework of action. At the end of this analysis, one may wonder if Niger's multi-party system will be able to facilitate the consolidation of democracy in the years to come.

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